



# WHY THEY SUCCEED OR FAIL: SELF CONCEPT AND ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLES OF IVORIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to investigate French speaking secondary school EFL learners' self-concept and their perceptions of the causes of their difficulties in learning a foreign language. For that purpose, 41 high school final year students in literature (LS), and 49 high school final year students in sciences (SS) were investigated using evocation questions, a Likert scale questionnaire, and open and closed questions. The research results revealed that both literature and science students had a negative self-concept, and perceived themselves as not deeply involved in the language class. These learners attributed the causes of their difficulties in the language class either to the teacher or to the coefficient of English. Such findings highlight the essential role of EFL teachers in increasing students' interest in the language class by helping them shape a positive self-concept. They also underline the necessity of increasing the coefficient of English as a discipline in our schools.

**KEY WORDS:** self-concept, attribution, self esteem, self-efficacy, self-handicapping.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the work and seminars about EFL teaching and learning in our country are aimed at giving precise and coherent outlines to decision-making about 'good' pedagogical practices. They also mostly focus on the cognitive dimensions of language learning. Yet, studies abound that highlight the importance of affective factors in language learning and their impact on language achievement (Gardner 1985; Skehan 1989; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1992; Arnold, 2007). These studies predominantly indicate that what happens in the learner's mind and that personally affects him, i.e. his joys and frustrations, his fears and beliefs are as essential as the development of his cognitive skills. Moreover it is well known that learners' perceptions of themselves, their self-concept, and how they experience success and failure is pivotal in guiding and regulating their behavior in the classroom (Brown & Smart, 1991, p. 373), and in determining their relationship with others (Arnold, 2007). In the same line, studies indicate that learners' perception of causality i.e. what they believe to be the causes of their success and failure positively or negatively influence their motivation (Fitch 1970; Ickes and Layden, 1978; Dörnyei, 2000; Williams and Burden, 1997).

However, despite the abundance of these studies that highlight the relationship between learners' self-concept and achievement in learning (Marsh & al., 2005), and learners' success and failure attributions and their classroom attitude, research on Ivorian EFL learners regarding these concepts are not easily found. The present study attempts to fill in this gap by examining the content of some Ivorian EFL learners' self-concept and how their beliefs about their success and failure affect their learning experience.

## II. THE THEORIES OF THE RESEARCH

### II.1. Learners' self-concept

The whole of a person's perceptions and beliefs as well as the resulting attitudes constitute his 'self-concept' (Legendre, 1993). This self-concept is shaped through his/her experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about the self and the deliberate efforts he/she makes to regulate his/her behavior (Leary and Tangney, 2003). As such, the self-concept also encompasses a person's knowledge and self-assessment, and the description that he/she thinks others make of him/her (Heroux and Farrell, 1985; Muller, 1978).

In education, the "academic self-concept" (Legendre, 2005) is said to be directly related to learners' academic performance, and to their cognition, perception and affect (Gueyraud and Dassa, 1998). As such, it is critically linked with what an individual thinks of himself in a discipline and his performance in that particular discipline (Bandura, 1982; 1997). Thus, a positive self concept would lead to effort and perseverance in the face of difficulty, and consequently to efficiency and success in school work Pintrich and Schrauben, 1992) whereas poor school performance would correlate with low self concept (Hamacheck, 1965; Bloom, 1979; Pintrich and Schrauben, 1992). Self-concept is therefore related to self-esteem or people's judgment of their own worth or value, based on a feeling of 'efficacy' (Richards and Schmidt, 2002), or on the degree to which one believes he/she is competent, important, and successful (Coopersmith, 1967). What matters then, is not the reality, but the belief that one has qualities or weaknesses, potentialities or limits (Andre & Lelord, 1999).

Under the influence of negative beliefs, the learner's self-confidence would decrease, and this would result in a shy attitude (Bariaud and Bourcet, 1998). He/she would also tend to avoid 'uncomfortable' school tasks and lack the motivation to persevere. On the other hand, a student with a high self-esteem would

say about himself: "I have qualities, strength and talents. So I personally value myself, even if I face difficulties." So, what is important here is the belief that one can perform a particular task; not the evaluation of one's competence in achieving success (Schunk, 1989). Put differently, possessing the qualities necessary for the performance of a task does not matter as much as actually feeling capable of carrying it out. Basically then, self-esteem is about the answer to this question: "In the present situation, can I accomplish this task?", or 'do I have the necessary skills to do well in this task'?

Research reveals that learners who perceive themselves as capable will see the most difficult tasks as challenges and will persist to overcome difficulties whereas those who have doubts about their competence will be weakly engaged in achieving the goals they choose to attain (Bandura, 1994; Pajares, 1996; Margolis & McCabe, 2003).

### II.2. Learners' attributions

In seeking to understand why events have occurred people make attributions (Weiner, 1985; 1989). They infer the causes of their failures and successes (Heider, 1944-1958) based on a limited range of internal (personal) and external (environmental) factors.

In academic situations, students refer to external factors like 'luck' and 'difficulty', or to internal factors such as 'ability' and 'effort' to account for events they have experienced (Weiner, 1986). Those who feel personally responsible for the things that happen are termed 'internalisers', whereas those who feel that the things they experience are determined by forces beyond their control are termed 'externalisers' (Williams and Burden, 1997). At the heart of the attribution theory is finally the idea that the type attribution learners make will determine their mental state and behavior in a learning situation, or help to shape their emotional and behavioral responses to situations they experience.

Because they perceive failure as essentially due to disability or a lack of control over their actions, some students become unmotivated, show signs of anxiety and depression, and give up trying to learn (Williams and Burden, 1997). This attitude, also referred to as 'learned helplessness' (Seligman, 1993), creates: (1) a deficit in motivation: the individual does not try to succeed in class, (2) a cognitive deficit: the individual does not use and does not learn strategies that could help him or her succeed in the future, and (3) an emotional deficit, a feeling of depression that increases disengagement (Maier and Seligman, 1976). These three deficits can in turn, lead to self-handicapping which occurs when a learner creates obstacles to justify his incapability and preserve his/her self-esteem (Tice & Baumeister, 1990).

By self-handicapping, the learner tries to diminish his personal responsibility in the mediocrity of the result or in the failure (Berglas and Jones, 1978). He does not question his personal abilities, but presents another cause to justify his/her failure. In case of success however, his capacities appear to be increased because this success has occurred despite 'unfavorable circumstances'. Self-handicapping behaviors would increase when students' grades are low (Strunk and Steele (2011), and would be a corollary of a low self-esteem (De Castella et al, 2013,) and a low academic self-efficacy (Gadbois and Sturgeon, 2011).

## III. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to investigate self-concept and attribution in Ivorian learners of English in secondary education. It further aimed to explore the relationship and

interaction between students' self concept, their attributions and their classroom behavior.

The following research questions (RQs) were therefore sought:

- RQ1: What is the content of EFL learners' self-concept?
- RQ2: What are their causal attributions for success and failure?
- RQ3: How do their attributions affect their classroom behavior?

#### IV. THE STUDY

##### IV.1. The Setting

The research was conducted in a secondary school where English is taught from the first to the final year as a compulsory subject beside mathematics, physical sciences and French. However, when they reach form six, students major either in literature or in science. In final year literary classes, students (LS) take four hours of English lessons per week, with a coefficient of 4, while in final year science classes, students (SS) only take two hours of English lessons per week, with a coefficient of 1. It should also be noted that students in final year literary classes are tested both in Oral Communication (Speaking) and in writing at the end of secondary school examination (Baccalauréat) whereas those in final year science classes are only tested in writing.

##### IV.2. The Participants

The study population consisted of 41 high school final year students in literature, (LS), and 49 high school final year students in sciences (SS). We therefore worked on a sample of 90 high school final year students. They were chosen because of their availability and according to the compatibility of their schedule with the researcher's.

##### IV.3. The procedures for data collection and analysis

A mixed research approach was adopted to allow both a quantitative and a qualitative data collection and analysis. Most of all, our aim in using this method was to create the conditions for a stereoscopy, i.e., to multiply the information and to reinforce the possibilities of comparison and objectification (Combes, 2001). Quantitative techniques were therefore used to situate the validity of qualitative data, and the qualitative method allowed to specify and to humanize in a certain way, quantitative data (Long, 1980; Ellis, 1984; Van Lier, 1988; Albero, 2004). We therefore used:

1. **Evocation Questions:** Students were specifically asked to write five words that would come to mind in two (2) situations regarding their EFL classes: 1) 'it's time for the English class', and 2) 'You've been in the English class for 45 minutes'
2. **An Attitude Scale Questionnaire:** students were asked to indicate on a five point scale (1-that's not me at all 2-that's not really me 3-uncertain 4-that's almost me 5-that's really me) to what extent they thought a number propositions characterized them.
3. **Closed questions:** students answered yes/no questions and multiple choice questions about their learning behavior in the classroom.
4. **An interview:** Among the 90 students, some were randomly selected to further elicit the responses to the closed questions. The aim was to collect discursive data reflecting their conscious or unconscious mental universe.

The quantitative data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Microsoft Excel 2007 whereas the qualitative data obtained were analyzed using content analysis.

#### V. THE RESULTS

##### V.1. Students' evocations

Tables 1 and 2 show the distribution of LS and SS' evocations regarding situation 1: it's time for the English class.

**TABLE 1. THE DISTRIBUTION OF L STUDENTS' EVOCATIONS ABOUT SITUATION 1**

	Evocations	n	%	
Positive	➤ Preparedness	15	45.4	70 %
	➤ Joy	07	21.1	
	➤ Study	01	03.03	
Negative	➤ Discouragement	03	09.09	30 %
	➤ Anxiety	03	09.09	
	➤ Monotony	02	06.06	
	➤ Laziness	01	03.03	
	➤ Eagerness	01	03.03	

Table 1 reveals that 70% of LS' evocations have a positive connotation against 30% of negative evocations. The most frequent positive words were 'preparedness' (45.45%) and 'joy' (21.12%).

**TABLE 2. THE DISTRIBUTION OF S STUDENTS' EVOCATIONS ABOUT SITUATION 1**

	Evocations	n	%	
Positive	➤ Joy	10	22,73	48 %
	➤ Preparedness	10	22,73	
	➤ Easiness	01	02,27	
Negative	➤ Indifference	10	22,73	52 %
	➤ Unhappiness	09	20,45	
	➤ Resignation	03	06,82	
	➤ Anxiety	01	02,27	

In table 2, it is apparent that S students' negative (52%) and positive (48 %) evocations were very close in terms of percentage. The students mostly used words like 'joy' (22.73), 'preparedness' (22.73) next to words like 'indifference' (20.45%), and 'unhappiness' (20.45%).

Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution of L and S students' evocations about situation 2: You've been in the English class for 45 minutes.

**TABLE 3. THE DISTRIBUTION L STUDENTS' EVOCATIONS ABOUT SITUATION 2**

	Evocations	n	%	
Positive	➤ Concentration	05	15.62	47 %
	➤ Joy	04	12.50	
	➤ Patience	01	03.12	
	➤ Eagerness	05	15.62	
Negative	➤ Weariness	09	28.12	53 %
	➤ Indifference	03	09.37	
	➤ Anxiety	03	09.37	
	➤ Disatisfaction	02	06.25	

Table 3 indicates that L students' evocations with a negative connotation have a higher percentage (53%) than their evocation with a positive connotation (47%). These students' evocations mostly revealed words like 'weariness' (28.12%) and 'eagerness' (15.62%).

**TABLE 4. THE DISTRIBUTION S STUDENTS' EVOCATIONS ABOUT SITUATION 2**

	Mots évoqués	n	%	
Positive	➤ Interest	5	10,87	13
	➤ Joy	01	02,17	
Negative	➤ Weariness	16	34,78	87
	➤ Exasperation	17	36,96	
	➤ Indifference	07	15,22	

In Table 4, the figures show that S students' evocations generated a greater number of negative terms (87%). The most recurring evocations were exasperation (36.96%), weariness (34.78%) and indifference (15.22%).

##### V.2. Students' perceptions of their attitudes

Table 5 is about students' level of agreement or disagreement with the following 10 propositions: 1. Listening carefully when the English teacher speaks; 2. Promptly executing the teacher's instructions; 3. Raising the hand to ask questions; 4. Raising the hand to answer questions; 5. Participating in class discussions; 6. Regularly reviewing courses; 7. Asking questions to check whether one has understood; 8. Seeking to understand why one has a bad grade; 9. Taking pleasure in English classes; 10. Meeting the English teacher during break hours.

**TABLE 5. THE DISTRIBUTION OF L AND S STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ATTITUDE IN CLASS**

	1		2		3		4		5		N r	
	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	S
1. Listening carefully ...	0	01	01	03	06	10	13	20	19	12	02	02
2. Executing instructions	01	06	01	05	10	09	12	17	14	11	03	01
3. Raising the hand	07	18	08	09	08	10	10	05	06	07	02	00
4. Raising the hand ...	03	13	05	07	07	06	13	14	12	09	01	00
5. Participating	03	19	07	03	03	10	12	11	15	05	01	01
6. Reviewing lessons	01	10	02	08	13	08	06	13	06	08	03	02
7. Asking oneself .....	02	12	04	08	13	14	10	13	10	01	02	01
8. Seeking to understand	00	11	01	03	07	06	09	07	22	20	02	02
9. Taking pleasure in ...	00	04	04	03	11	16	13	10	11	10	15	01
10. Meeting the teacher...	3	38	02	08	02	01	02	02	00	02	00	00
Total	51	132	35	57	80	90	100	112	115	85	31	10

The results in table 5 indicate that LS' score were comparatively higher for scale item 5- that's really me (115), whereas, SS score for scale item 1- That's not me at all (132).

Figure 1 below gives a clearer vision of the distribution of scores between L and S students.

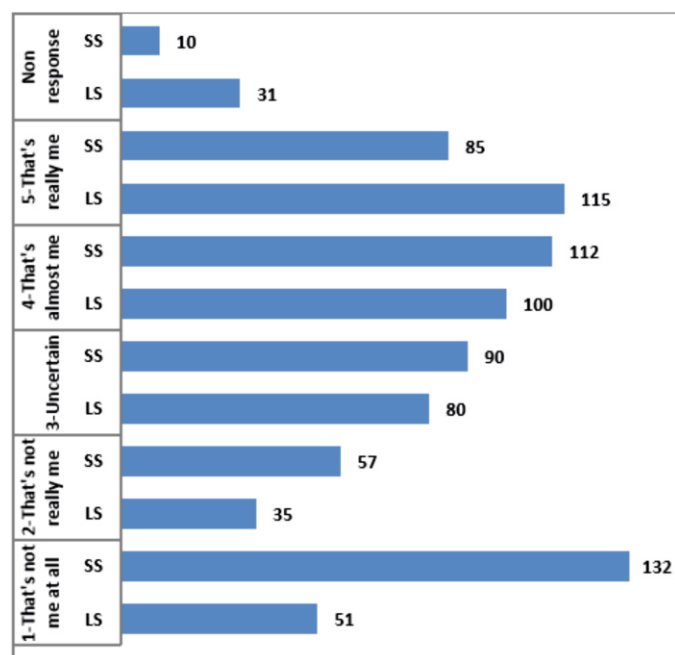


FIGURE 1: A COMPARISON OF L AND S STUDENTS' SCORES

So, comparatively, as can be seen in figure I, SS perceived themselves as less involved in the English class than LS. A look at the answers to the questions in table 6 will help clarify the significance of these scores.

### V.3. Students' responses regarding their involvement in the language class.

Table 6 is about students' responses about their level of involvement in the EFL class.

TABLE 6. L AND S STUDENTS' ANSWERS REGARDING THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE LANGUAGE CLASS

Questions	Yes %		No %		N.r %	
	L	S	L	S	L	S
1. Do you think that you raise your hand quite often?	63,41	42,86	26,83	53,06	9,76	04,08
2. Do you wait until you know the answer before you raise your hand?	56,10	30,61	31,70	44,90	12,20	24,49
3. Are you bothered to be questioned when you have not raised your finger?	29,27	44,90	58,54	46,94	12,19	08,16
4. Would you like the teacher to ask you questions...?	97,56	40,82	02,44	48,98	00	10,20
5. Do you think the teacher often asks you questions...?	29,27	36,73	70,73	59,18	00	04,09
6. When you have not understood, dare you ask for clarifications?	39,02	42,85	60,98	53,06	00	04,08
7. Are you embarrassed to speak English in class ...?	58,54	34,69	41,46	65,31	00	00

The answers to question 5 in this table revealed that both groups felt that the teacher does not often involve them in the class (L students at 70.73% and S students at 59.18%). However, 60.99% of L students and 53.06% of S students, according to their answers to question 6, admitted that they did not ask teachers for clarification when they did not understand a point. It is also notable that L students estimated at 63.41% that they often raise their hands in the classroom, but would rather wait until they know the answers (56.10%) before doing it. Also, L students agreed (58.54%) that they felt embarrassed to speak English in the classroom whereas SS at 65.31% surprisingly thought they did not.

In sum these results reveal that LS and to a larger extent SS believed they were not really engaged in the language class. They corroborate the results in tables 5 and figure 1. Now, how do these students perceive their language learning capacity and how do they account for their success and failure?

V.4. Students' responses about their beliefs regarding their capacity and failures. The tables 7, 8, and 9 are about the students' perceptions of their capacity as learners and the causes of their failures.

TABLE 7. L AND S STUDENTS' BELIEFS REGARDING THEIR CAPACITY

Question 8. Since I have been learning English ...	L	S
a. I understand absolutely everything	0	4,08
b. I understand almost everything	7,32	06,12
c. I just understand what is necessary	48,78	42,85
d. I do not understand much	36,58	46,93
e. Other	00	00
Non response	7,32	00

Table 7 shows that almost half of L students (48.78%) assumed that they understood just what was necessary, and nearly the same percentage of S students (46.93%) believed they did not understand much. Also, only 07.31% of L students thought they understand everything against only 4.08% of S students.

TABLE 8. STUDENTS' ANSWERS REGARDING WHAT DETERMINES SUCCESS OR FAILURE

Question 9. What makes the good learner is .....	L	S
a. The teacher	56,10	38,77
b. The students	39,02	53,06
c. The school	00	00
d. The classroom	00	02,04
e. Other	04,88	00
Non responses	00	06,13

It appears in table 8 that over half of L students (56.10%) believed that what makes the good learner is the teacher, whereas so for the majority of S students (53.06%) being good learner depended on the learner himself.

### V.5. The students' interviews regarding their success and failure

#### Literature students' interview

The content of L students' interview revealed that their attributions were related to :

- English as a classroom discipline: " English is very important"
- The teacher: " seeing him teaching does not make you want to do English ..."; "The does not encourage you..."
- The teaching style of the teacher: "It is always the same procedure.... The teacher must put the emphasis on oral communication....too much use of the textbook....
- Their negative past experiences "I am not good at because of my teachers from the sixth to the fourth. The teachers did not forgive any error, ... the teacher was always absent . The teacher insulted us "

#### Science students' interview

The content of S students' interviews showed that their attributions regarding their success and failure in English had to do with:

- the value and importance of English: " English does not allow to pass the BAC", " English is not really important".
- their personal attitude: "we neglect (English) .... we do not buy the textbooks..., the students deliberately forget the notebooks at home. "
- their past experiences: "the teacher was too demanding ... there are remote causes to our attitude ."
- to themselves, to their own incapacity: "I know that I am terrible in English ... I missed the fundamentals ...."

### VI. DISCUSSION

We set out to research three questions regarding EFL learners' self-concept, their causal attributions for their failures, and how these attributions affected their classroom behavior. The results of the study showed that both Literature and science students perceived themselves as somehow reluctant to take risks in the language class. Both groups also indicated that they experienced negative feelings such as weariness, tiredness, exasperations etc during language classes. For literature students (LS), this situation was due to the teacher, whereas science students acknowledged being responsible for their difficulties in the language class. They also attributed the reasons of their failure to the coefficient of English which is only 1 in final year science classes. We will discuss the results in terms



of learners' self concept and their causal attributions.

### Learners' self-concept

This study produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in the fields of psychology and education. The findings are consistent with those of Bandura (1982; 1997), Coopersmith (1967), Arnot (2006) and (Finn, 1989) who suggested that when students are increasingly frustrated and become aware of their academic failure, they tend to adopt abnormal behaviors and eventually drop out. In our study, Science Students (SS), who generally perceived themselves as not good at English were continuously in the grip of inhibitory feelings such as anxiety, avoidance and disengagement from learning. The finding of our work is also in agreement with the studies of Berglas and John (1978), Strunk and steel (2011), De Caslteloti and al. (2013), and Gadbois and Sturgeon (2011) showing that learners self-handicapped to minimize the negative effects of their poor results. It would seem that, after a process of rationalization based on a poor perception of themselves as learners, science students (SS) for example, have come to develop a kind of learned resignation resulting in a motivational, cognitive and emotional deficit. Consequently, their attitude in the language class is based on the idea that: "English does not count much for getting the final year exam" so, «English is not too important". Such perceptions of the learning of English leads them to turn other subjects, considered more important and less troublesome: "Sometimes we prefer not to come to class and do our mathematic assignment. Anyway, the grade weight of 1 in English is not going to help us much. ". From this perspective it is not inappropriate to assume that learners' perceptions of the value, the immediate importance, and the utility of a subject, directly influence the level of cognitive engagement they are ready to invest into learning that subject. Such a perception, coupled with a low self-efficacy: "English is not made for me, I am a science major", and a self-handicapping attitude (forgetting the notebooks at home, go out during the lesson, do not bringing the text books etc.), reinforced students' reluctance to get involved in the language class. The present findings therefore seem to be consistent with research which found that the degree to which a person considers himself/herself competent in a subject is essential for successful learning (Richards and Smith, 2002).

Another reason for the students passivity in the language class, as indicated by the research results was the coefficient of 1 for science classes: "English does not allow pass the BAC (end of secondary school diploma). It would seem that this idea serves a function of preservation of their self-image, and a function of justification of their failure, on the ground that they have no personal or official objective to reach with English", obtaining the final year diploma for example. Consequently, the group of science students appears to have developed a consistent 'failure' behavior to cope with a discipline that they do not 'reject' (65, 31% said they did not feel embarrassed to speak English in the classroom), but for which they admit not possessing the necessary skills and resources to learn.

Literature Students (LS), who equated English with obtaining final satisfaction (getting grades, passing the final year exam), perceived English as a key subject: 'with the coefficient of 4, if you play you will fail (...) ». But surprisingly, they indicated that not really being involved in the language class and experienced inhibitory feelings (see table 6). A possible explanation of this situation is that uncomfortable foreign language learners are less likely to take risks (Ely, 1986), and to use the second or foreign language in the classroom, because their inability to use it may reveal a lack of aspect of their person. This feeling is particularly noticeable in situations of communication in English with their teacher and/or with their classmates. Indeed, the possibility of making a considerable number of errors (imperfect pronunciation, bad emphasis, incorrect phrases, etc.) in many cases impacts their self-confidence, and therefore their self-concept. So, they withdraw from learning opportunities or even 'rebel' against the teacher.

### Causal attributions in learners

Unlike science students (SS) who clearly attributed their failure in the English class to themselves: we know we are not good at English...we have never been good at English..., literature students (LS) attributed their failure to learn to their teacher: « Our English Teacher does not motivate us to learn English », « When you see him you don't feel like learning. " At this level the teacher is perceived as an obstacle rather than an ally in the way to success.

Under the influence of 'negative' emotions, learners tend to raise an emotional filter that makes them feel anxious and incapable of taking action (Krashen, 1982). This attitude reinforces the idea that success in learning in general and specially in foreign language learning relies to a large extent on what happens 'between' the actors of the class, the type of relationship between the teacher and the students (Allwright and Bailey, 1991). When students become emotionally distant from the teacher and / or what he teaches, they behave in such a way as to minimize the negative effect of their failure on their self-esteem. They would rather consider him as the cause of their worries and decide to learn another subject they also consider as important: " It is even better learn philosophy than English. " or they just aim for the pass mark, making the least efforts.

Literature students' repeated inability to get involved in the English class led them to find an external factor to their difficulties (Williams and Burden, 1997; Seligman, 1993). Their attitude in the language class is also highly symptomatic of 'learned helplessness' which occurs as a result of repeated failures (Seligman,

& Teasdale, 1978) or as a result of learners' discomfort in the classroom.

### VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Our aim was to describe, analyze, and understand the self-concept of final year secondary school students in literature (LS) and science (SS), and the causes they attribute to their successes and failures in learning English as a foreign language. The results of the investigation indicated that these students perceived themselves as not really involved in the language class. Both literature and science students' evocations showed that they experienced 'negative' feelings such as weariness, tiredness, exasperation, etc., during the language class, and reacted by attributing the causes of their failure to themselves as learners, to the value of subject-matter, or to the teacher. So, a major finding of this study is that foreign language learners' self-concept is determined by their level of anxiety in the classroom. This in turn has an impact on their self-esteem and leads then to self-handicap and attribute their failure to external factors. The study also showed that the grade weight or coefficient determines learners' level investment in subjects. So, a higher grade weight for English in science classes would be perceived by learners as an indication of value.

Taken together, these results suggest that it is essential that the 'fear' of the teacher be considered, alongside with language anxiety, as a major barrier to foreign language learning. If teachers simply take it for granted that learners' failures in learning the foreign language is simply due to a lack of capacity, they may overlook their own responsibility in their learners' failure. What is then essential in the language class is to find ways of reinforcing learners' self-esteem instead of demeaning, belittling them as they struggle to understand the intricacies of the foreign language. Teachers should learn and use motivational techniques to help learners develop positive self-efficacy beliefs: 'I can learn this language. I have the capacity to do it.' Student anxiety can also be reduced by conducting lessons in a varied manner, being friendly and available to offer help. Also, the coefficient of English as a subject-matter appears as a major determinant in learners' involvement in the language and in learners' causal attributions. Thus language teachers should make learning a successful undertaking for students who will then focus more on acquiring more knowledge than finding reasons for their failures. They will be more likely to look for internal factors rather than external factors to account for their success or failure in the language classroom.

Finally, this study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of why students in our language classes succeed or fail. But it was limited by the small number of participants. A study involving more participants will therefore be necessary for more findings about EFL learners' self-concept and attribution styles in our country.

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